Two Decades of Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.1999-2019: UBE Implementation, Achievement, Challenges and Suggested solutions

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ABSTRACT

In September 1999, the UBE was officially launched and passed into law in 2004 as an implementation tool of the government initiative to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in achieving the EFA. Researchers has agreed that the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Nigeria was also recognized as the predecessor of the present UBE Scheme, which has been directed towards the possibility of increasing the number of attendance or enrollment in schools, as well as the provision of an excellent opportunity to correct the current imbalance. The major objective and aim of the UBE programme is the provision of free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6—15 years. However, for the Universal Basic Education programme to be truly free and universal, efforts must be made to check those factors that are known to have hindered the success of such programmes in the past. This paper thereore will consider the implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria -.its achievement, challenges and make some suggestion. The paper hereby made some recommendations that the government should provide adequate fund for the UBE programme. **Keywords:** decade, education, program, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has a federal system of government with 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. Within the states, there are 744 local governments in total. Education is administered by the federal, state and local governments. The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for overall policy formation and ensuring quality control, but is primarily involved with tertiary education. School education is largely the responsibility of state (secondary) and local (elementary) governments. The country is multilingual, and home to more than 250 different ethnic groups. The languages of the three largest groups, the Yoruba, the Ibo, and the Hausa, are the language of instruction in the earliest years of basic instruction; they are replaced by English in Grade 4. Nigeria's education system encompasses three different sectors: basic education (nine years), post-basic/senior secondary education (three years), and tertiary education (four to six years, depending on the program of study). According to Nigeria's latest National Policy on Education (2004), basic education covers nine years of formal (compulsory) schooling consisting of six years of elementary and three years of junior secondary education. Post-basic education includes three years of senior secondary education.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria was launched in 1999, with the goal of providing "free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6-15 years" The programme, however, was not able to take off immediately after its launch as it did not have legal backing. Therefore, initial UBE-related activities were carried out only in areas of social mobilisation, infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials, etc. The UBE programme only took off effectively with the signing of the UBE Act in April 2004. Claudia I. (2017). The main beneficiaries of the programme are:

- Children aged 3-5 years, for Early Children Care and Development Education (ECCDE);
- Children aged 6-11+ years for primary school education;
- Children aged 12-14+ years for junior secondary school education.

Its scope included the following expansion of activities in basic education:

- "Programmes and initiatives for [ECCDE];
- "Programmes and initiatives for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills, especially for adults (persons aged 15 and above);
- "Out-of-school, non-formal programmes for the updating of knowledge and skills for persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for lifelong learning;

 "Special programmes of encouragement to all marginalised groups: girls and women, nomadic populations, out-of-school youth and the almajiris (Qur'anic student);

• "Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth, who have not had the benefit of formal education, (Claudia I, 2017).

The Act also provides the establishment of the Universal Basic education Commission (UBEC) to co-ordinate the implementation of the programme at state and Local Government levels through the state Basic education Board (SUBEB) of each state and the Local Government education Authority (LGEA). The UBEC was formally established on the 7th of October 2004.

Education is the bedrock of every nation. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a scheme aiming at providing free, quality, functional and compulsory education to all Nigerian children covering the primary and the Junior secondary school (JSS1-3). The first batch of the programme (lower basic) was enrolled in 2000/2001 academic session and the upper basic in 2006/2007. The Universal Basic education is an educational programme to replace the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Programme. The universal basic education scheme is broader than the universal primary education programme. It is a scheme which intends to provide functional, free and quality education irrespective of sex, race, religion and location, to all primary schools and junior secondary schools. The scheme also stresses out the education of girls, nomads, migrants, refugees and the disable (Christine, Hayatu, (2014), FME, 2000). This paper is aimed to discuss the UBE programme implementation, achievement of UBE programme, challenges facing the UBE programme and come up with some suggestions that will help in the sustainability of the UBE programme in Nigeria.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Concept of Universal Basic Education

Basic Education means the type of education, in quality and content, that is given in the first level of education. However, there are variations in its scope and duration from country to country. In Nigeria for instance, basic education was equated with six years of primary schooling in the past. Currently basic education is extended to include the three years of Junior Secondary School. Universal Basic Education (UBE) is conceived to embrace formal education up to age 14 or 15, as well as adult, Normadic and nonformal education including education of the marginalized groups within the Nigerian society. In a clear form, Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a reformed programme in Nigeria's basic education delivery (from primary one, all through to junior secondary school class 3) and is to reinforce the implementation of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in order to provide greater access and ensure quality throughout the Federation as it is free and compulsory (Opoh, Okou, Rosemary A.2015 in Adomeh, Arhedo & Omoike; 2007). Researchers agreed that UBE is a scheme and process of fulfilling the aim of Education For All (EFA) as endorsed at the World conference on education held in Jomtien in 1990. According to the world conference on education, basic education is made free and available to all and sundry, thus emphasizing free access, equity, efficiency, literacy, numeracy and lifelong skills for all.

2.2 Objectives of Universal Basic Education

According to the implementation guideline released by the Federal Ministry of Education in February 2000, the programme aims at achieving the following objectives

- 1. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- 2. Provide free, compulsory, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age group.
- 3. Reduce drastically, drop outrage from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency.
- 4. Cater for drop outs and out of school children/adolescent through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- 5. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative and life skills (as well as the ethnical moral and civic values needed for laying the foundation for lifelong learning.

This programme is expected to be a continuation of the UPE programme which was abandoned in 1976 UBE programme was launched by President Obasanjo 30th September 1999 in order to realize the earlier stated objectives (Amuchie, Asotibe & Christina, 2013).

2.3 Management and implementation of Universal Basic Education

The implementation of the UBE programme is overseen by the UBE Commission (UBEC), with a range of other institutions specifically responsible for education in the country. Basic education administration and management in Nigeria is the responsibility of Local Education Authorities (LGEAs) under the supervision of State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) and the UBEC at the federal level. There are a large number of other institutions, including: the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC), the National Teachers' Institute (NTI), the Nigerian Education and Research Development Council (NERDC), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), Claudia I. (2017).

2.4 Achievement of Universal Basic Educationin Nigeria

Since the introduction of UBE programme from 1999 till date, the programme have achieve moderately to an extent. Some of the achievement of the UBE programme from 1999 till date includes the following:

Increase in enrolment of School children

- Primary schools (grade 1 to 6). A total of 24,893,442 children were enrolled in Nigeria's public and private primary schools in 2012. This had grown to 25.6 million by 2016, according to the education ministry.
- The year with the highest enrolment figure was 2013, when 26.2 million kids were enrolled in primary schools countrywide.
- In 2016, the net enrolment rate for primary schools was 65%. This was the share of the country's primary school age children who were actually enrolled in school.
- Lower secondary schools (form 1 to 3). Enrolment in lower secondary schools was highest in 2014, when just over 6.2 million pupils were registered. In 2015 it dropped marginally, and in 2016 fell to fewer than 6 million (David, 2019).

Early childhood development

The Early Child Development Index measures the share of three- to five-year-olds who are developing appropriately in three out of four areas:

- Literacy and numeracy
- Physical
- Socio-emotional
- Cognitive

The transition rate to secondary school is the proportion of pupils in the final grade of primary school who enroll in the first grade of secondary school the following school year. The Unicef surveys show that while the percentage of children completing primary school increased over a decade, the share eventually making it into secondary schools almost halved between 2007 and 2016/17. In 2011, the index was at 60.9%, moving up slightly to 61.2% in the 2016/17 survey. "The index is very important as it shows the extent to which government, parents and other major stakeholders are affecting the general growth of a child (David ,2019).

A research was carried out by Ezeano (2018) the study investigated the extent to which the UBE objectives have been achieved. The five UBE objectives guided the study. The major finding of this study is that four out of five objectives have been achieved to moderate extent in Enugu state while objectives 4 has only been achieved to a very little extent. The implications is that school children still drop out of school and complementary approaches are not adequately provided and promoted for basic education.

3. CHALLENGES OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION

The Universal Basic Education actually started in 1999 with many issues. Some of the challenges confronting the Universal Basic Education include the following:

3.1 Challenges of poor planning/ management conflict roles/poor implementation of UBE / poor inspection and supervision/ poor stakeholder's participation

The planning of UBE programme was wrongly planned. Christine, Hayatu (2014) observed that proper planning was not done before launching it. With the experience of UPE, it was expected that systematic planning would have been done before the take-off of the UBE programme.

The UBE programme in Nigeria is also confronted with the challenges of management role conflict between the federal, states and the local government and various agencies of the government. However, there is no clarity on the management structures and guidelines for the programme's delivery, Claudia I. (2017). Arong and Ogabadu (2010) attested that the UBEC was given responsibility for quality assurance, a role that overlaps the previously established work of the Federal Inspectorate Service. Neither of these institutions is entirely independent, and school inspections are sometimes duplicated or missed altogether, or the results are not properly reported. This confusion is compounded by the low capacity in both institutions. Similarly, World Bank (2008) uncovered lack of clarity about responsibilities can also be observed across the four agencies tasked with data collection. As a result, data collection is not standardized and data are unreliable.

Another problem of UBE programme is poor implementation of the programme across the state and area councils. Cox (1996) and Mutiu (1994) have argued that the main problem confronting education in the less developed countries as the inability to coordinate and effectively manage available resources. Ogunode (2009) the coverage of the UBE programme is not spread equally to all the geopolitical zones of the country.

There is the challenge of poor supervision and inspection. Femi (2012) observed that the UBE programme supervision and inspection is poorly done across the country.

The participation of the stakeholders in the UBE programme is not encouraging. Ogunode (2013) agreed to this, UBE programme lacks the support and participation of the majorities of the stakeholders in the country.

3.2 Challenges of funding and misused of international support fund

Inadequate funding is another problem facing the implantation of UBE programme. UNESCO recommends that developing countries like Nigeria should dedicate at least 15 to 26% of their spending to education. But since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the country has never budgeted more than 12% of its public resources to education. In Nigeria's 2018 budget, education is set to get N651.2 billion (US\$1.88 billion), or about 7% of the total spend. Less than 20% of this will go to building new schools, buying learning equipment and other capital projects. There are be complaint about the misused of international support fund for the UBE programme in Nigeria (David, 2019).

3.3 Challenges of qualified Teachers/training and retraining o teachers and teachers retention

The statistics obtained from the Human Development Index of 2016 revealed that Nigeria did not have sufficient qualified teachers in primary schools. Only 66 percent of teachers in Nigerian primary schools were trained to teach. That is, about two out of every have teachers in Nigeria were not qualified to teach pupils. Education is in disarray as people without requisite skills are being employed to transfer knowledge to hapless children Osunyikanmi, Adebukola Foluke (2018).

Evidence from a teacher needs surveys across Nigeria demonstrates alarmingly low levels of pedagogical skills and subject content knowledge of primary school teachers. Only approximately 20 per cent of primary school teachers possess the minimum requisite professional knowledge and skill levels. Only about 1 in 10 teachers have adequate competency to teach primary English. Although the majority of these teachers have Nigerian Certificate of Education qualifications, they still do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to support student learning (UNICEF, 2013).

The training and retraining of teachers in the UBE programme have been poor and not encouraging. Omotayo, (2004) it is regrettable to state that majority of the states seem to be less concerned with implementing the teacher professional development component of the UBE programme. Implementation realities have shown that there still some missing gaps that needed to be filled in the matter of continuous teachers preparations by state using the Federal Government UBE intervention funds. For instance, since there was no clear policy that existed on continuous professional development of teachers in the country, some states were found to be exploiting the vague policy to provide 'training' through the use of what may be term as 'road side consultants' whose training package were without recourse to the quality omission to make financial gains from the UBE intervention funds.

3.4 Challenges of quality- Teacher-students ratio/high enrolment learners

Ogunniran (2018) quoted World Bank in 2012 who reported that lack of and poor qualities of teachers are serious hindrance to students' enrollment and learning. Teacher/student ratios per pupil stood at 36:1 at

the primary level in 2010. In addition, estimates from the UBEC in 2009-2010 indicate that only 60% of primary school teachers are qualified. The lack of teachers is particularly acute in the Northwest and Northeast, where only 50% and 53% of teachers were qualified. The Southwest has close to 100% qualified teachers. But even teachers with qualifications do not have the adequate professional knowledge and competency to teach. A teacher assessment conducted in five states in 2010 illustrated that the majority of qualified teachers had only limited (0%-25%) or emergent (25%-50%) professional working knowledge.

The size of the class will definitely affect the implementation of UBE programme. Ohuche' and Ali (1989) observed that if the class is too large less attention will be paid to each pupil. Nowadays, there is population explosion in our primary schools. In his own contribution, Okoh (2000) observed that increase in class size also affects the effective implementation of vocational programmes the primary level. In term of net enrolment report from UNESCO UIS (2010), cited that about 10.5 million primary school children are out of school, which is about 42% of the primary-age population. Moreover, the trends are not promising. Net enrollment rate worsened over the past 10 years, from 61.3% in 1999 to 57.6% in 2010. Similarly, World Bank (2013) narrated that after an initial improvement from 84.2% to 102.66%, the gross enrollment rate declined to 83.3% in 2010. Arong and Agdadu (2010) had argued that the worsening outcomes can be attributed to governance issues including the creation of UBE in 2004 which expanded the role of the federal government in primary education.

One of the challenges facing the Universal basic education since its inception in 1999 is how to ensure gender equality.

3.5 Challenges of infrastructural facilities- Classroom, tables, Chairs and laboratories

The inadequate infrastructural facilities are another major problem confronting the implementation of the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria. Research by Christine, Hayatu, (2014) shows that there are insufficient and qualified basic science teachers. The outcome of the research also indicated that one of the major problems in the teaching and learning of basic science is lack of facilities such as well equipped workshops, laboratories and laboratory equipment. Most of the schools are without laboratories and workshops for the teaching of basic science and Technology. Taiwo and Omotayo (2012) ,also confirmed this when he observed that existing structures are dilapidated and are in a state of disrepair and most of school libraries and laboratories are ill equipped. Again, other educational related materials such as tables and chairs are either damaged or in short supply. Three demographic studies on the existing national situation in the primary education sector revealed that, 12% of primary school pupils sit on the floor, 38% classrooms have no ceilings, 87% classrooms overcrowded, while 77% pupils lack textbooks. Almost all sampled teachers are poorly motivated coupled with lack of community interest and participation in the management of the schools (Adunola Adepoju, Anne Fabiyi, 2015).

3.6 Challenges of Securities / Gender equality

Another problem confronting the full implementation of UBE programme in Nigeria is problem of insecurity in Northeast part o Nigeria. The insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria has been especially damaging to the education system. Since 2011, an estimated 19,000 teachers have been displaced and 1,200 schools have been damaged or destroyed. Approximately 1 million children in need and 600,000 children have lost access to learning due to the conflict. The education sector sustained an estimated \$272.96 million in damages to its infrastructure with Borno State most affected. This calls for the education sector to also play a role in strengthening social cohesion and peace building (UNICEF, 2017). Gender in particular is an important factor in the pattern of educational marginalization in Nigeria alongside geography. In northeast and northwest states of Nigeria the female primary net attendance ratio is 41.5 and 43.8 per cent respectively which means more than 50 per cent of girls are not in school. On average, only 10 girls go to school for every 14 boys enrolled. Furthermore, girls from poorer households and rural areas are more likely not to be in school (UNICEF, 2017 in NDHS, 2013).

3.7 Challenges of Learning Materials/Instruction Material/ICT

The Universal Basic Education programme is also been confronted with the problems of lack o learning materials like textbooks, pencil, biro and writing books. Research available shows that the share of children under five who have three or more children's books is measured.

The trend is downwards. Whereas the 2007 survey reported that 14% of children under five had at least three children's books, this dropped to 6% in 2011 and to 5.6% in the 2016/17 survey.

Instructional materials are also in limited supply or the programme. Instructional materials are aids used for supporting teaching and learning in classroom.

3.8 Charges of School Fees

Though basic education is officially free, the reality is that education related costs do exist, not just fees but also indirect costs and opportunity costs. Costs are multidimensional and may include: (1) direct fees which are paid directly to the school or school system for tuition, examination, activity costs, etc.; (2) indirect costs such as books, stationery, uniforms, transport, snacks/meals; and (3) opportunity costs such as loss of child labour at home, errand support and care of siblings. There is no direct funding provision to a school from the government to meet the operational cost of schools. The schools therefore charge various forms of levies to meet these costs (UNICEF & UNESCO UIS, 2012).

4. SUGGESTED WAYS FORWARD FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION INNIGERIA

4.1 Adequate funding / Training and Retraining of Teachers

One of the strategies to sustain the UBE programme in Nigeria is to ensure the programme is adequately funded. Osunyikanmi, Adebukola Foluke (2018) funds allocated to education must be raised to a minimum of 15 percent of total expenditure at the federal level. Also, the 36 state governments must be ready to commit 15 percent of their states' annual expenditures to education. Libraries must be stocked with the newest editions of books. School laboratories must be properly equipped.

Another strategy is the employment of more qualified teachers. There should be training and retraining programme for UBE teachers across the federation. According to Isangedighi (2007), the teacher is a decisive element of any instructional setting that decides the mood of the class. His qualification and experience determine his productivity. In most cases Nigerian basic school teachers who are overloaded with the task of teaching the students are not even qualified to teach. To overcome this problem of acute shortage of qualified and trained teachers to cope with expected increase in students' number, there is need for the training of teachers in the right quantity and quality. They should also be made to benefit from training and capacity building for the acquisition of pedagogical skills, Opoh, Unimna & Ogbaji 2014).

4.2 Quality Assurance through Effective Monitoring and Evaluation System

In order to consolidate on the gains achieved so far on UBE programme. There is that need that the government, the stakeholders and the community leaders should strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the UBE programme. Taiwo O. Omotayo (2012), Quality control is a must in the design and implementation process. Monitoring and evaluation of UBE programme should be a normal practice of Ministries of Education and should be carried out in a highly professional manner. This should be related to the issue of full professional status of planning and research unit of the ministry and other educational policy implementation agencies at all tiers of government. Ironically, the monitoring and evaluation system under the UPE programme was very ineffective. This ineffectiveness is capable of thwarting effective implementation of UBE programme objectives in Nigeria. Quality control through effective monitoring and proper evaluation should be conducted on a regular basis at the various stages of the UBE programme. More attention should be paid to school inspection, monitoring and evaluation as a quality control strategy to check the quality of the delivery of the UBE programme (Ejere, 2011).

4.3 Adequate Funding/ Adequate Planning and Projection

The UBE programme should be properly funded. The funds provided should be properly utilized for sustaining the programme. Accurate projections and effective cost analysis should be earned out to avoid under-funding. The expenditure should be properly monitored to avoid wastage of scarce resources an embezzlement (Amuchie, Asotibe & Christina 2013). The UBE programme should be properly planned and adequate projector should be made in terms of expected enrolment required teachers, infrastructure needs and equipment. The UPE programme failed because of poor or improper planning at a stage the enrolment increased far beyond the capacity of the school and teachers. Appropriate measures should be taken to check such occurrence the UBE programme. If planning does not meet up the expectations manpower and finance will be inadequate (Amuchie, Asotibe & Christina, 2013).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In September 1999, the UBE was officially launched and passed into law in 2004 as an implementation tool of the government initiative to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in achieving the EFA. Researchers has agreed that the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Nigeria was also recognized as the predecessor of the present UBE Scheme, which has been directed towards the possibility of increasing the number of attendance or enrollment in schools, as well as the provision of an excellent opportunity to correct the current imbalance. The major objective and aim of the UBE programme is the provision of free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6—15 years. This paper discussed the challenges facing the UBE programme from inception and the challenges includes poor planning/management conflict roles/poor implementation of UBE / poor inspection and supervision/ poor stakeholder's participation, funding and misused of international support fund, qualified teachers/training and retraining o teachers and teachers retention, infrastructural facilities- classroom, tables, chairs and laboratories and securities / gender equality and the paper therefore recommended the following;

- ♣ The government should adequately fund the Universal Basic Education;
- ♣ The management of Universal Basic Education (UBE) should constantly organize seminars and workshops to improve the capacity of the teachers and allow teachers to go for in-service programmes;
- The government should put in place a structure that will fully participate all the stakeholders in the educational sector to hear their view and suggestions;
- ♣ The government should stop all form of charges preventing the children from enrolling in the UBE programme;
- ♣ The government should empower the Monitoring and evaluation agencies to constantly supervise and inspect the UBE programme across the federation;
- The government should clearly define the roles of each arm of government and agencies for clarity of responsibilities;
- ♣ The required level of participation from the state government, local government and other agencies in terms of funding must be dearly specified;

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